

# The English Magazine

*Auspicium melioris ævi*

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## Romanticism, Past & Present

MORE than one of our correspondents has raised a question concerning our use of the word *Romantic*. Mr. C. D. King of St. Andrews writes in charming archaic style:—"I think it was the originall Romantick movement that, with its love of sociall and spirituall upheavall for its own sake, paved the way for the modern acceptance of the Evils about which your Magazines so rightly complain." Mr. N. M. Gwynne of West London asks "the romantic movement, in every field of human activity which it touched, *was a revolutionary movement* and was considered unspeakably vulgar by those who watched the revolution, did their best to defend the old values and customs and remembered the old values and customs when they were all but gone. What did romanticism mean if it did not mean abandonment of form, lack of restraint and aggressive sentimentality: the appeal to the emotions rather than the reason?"

These are reasoned remarks and it behoves us to reply to them as such. In the first place, let us note that the historical movement known as romanticism (we spell it with a small "r" to differentiate it from our own Romanticism) comprised many different and often conflicting strands from revolution to reaction, from democracy to hierarchy, from chaos and beastliness to chivalry and order. If Wordsworth's famous words on the French Revolution:—"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, / But to be young was very heaven!" were romantic in the abandoned, chaotic sense of that term, does not the very spirit of romance breathe in Burke's famous words on the same subject?

It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the Queen of France, then the Dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in,—glittering like the morning-star, full of life, and splendour, and joy . . . Little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened

her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded.

The Revolution itself, far from being a romantic movement, was the apotheosis of neo-classical rationalism, with its revival (in perverted form) of classical republicanism, its ceremonial enthronement of the Goddess of Reason in Notre Dame cathedral and, beneath all the rhetoric, its ultimately Whiggish motive force—to replace the old hegemony of the nobility with the new hegemony of money. If certain romantics were taken in by the spurious claims of the Revolution, it is also worthy of note that the three English romantics most vocal in its support—Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey—all became staunch conservatives without ceasing to be romantics. Edmund Gosse summarised the position thus:

Early in the century, Wordsworth had become, what he remained, a Church and State Tory of the extreme type; Southey, who in 1794 had, "shocking to say, wavered between deism and atheism," promptly developed a horror for every species of liberal speculation and contributed with gusto to the [high Tory] *Quarterly Review*. Temperament and circumstance combined to make Scott a conservative in politics and manners . . . we look back from 1815 with a sense of the extraordinary modesty and wholesome law-abiding morality of the generation which introduced romanticism in this country.

. . . Both these great writers [Wordsworth and Coleridge] spoke much of passion, and insisted on its resumption by an art which had permitted it to escape too long. But by passion Wordsworth understood no unruly turbulence of the senses, no revolt against conventional manners, no disturbance of social custom. He conceived the term, and illustrated his conception in his poetry, as intense emotion concentrated upon some object of physical or pathetic beauty—such as a mountain, a child, a flower—and led directly by it into the channel of imaginative expression. He saw that there were aspects of beauty which might lead to danger, but from these he and Scott, and even Coleridge, resolutely turned away their eyes.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the most important point to grasp here—and the point most obfuscated by the whole tendency of modern literary interpretation—is that these writers were not merely

passively accepting social conventions or failing, through negligence, or preoccupation, or "social conditioning", to criticise the "prudish" conventions of their time. They were helping to establish those conventions. They were ahead of their time—the forerunners of Victorian sensibility. They were actively in revolt against the crude licentiousness of the 18th century, and were setting new standards of purity and refinement which were to help form the better aspects of the Victorian era.

It is one of the most deeply-entrenched commonplaces of the liberal interpretation of history and literature that decency, propriety and morality are blind products of an unintelligent or prejudiced social order, while the man of genius represents intelligent revolt against such restraints, sometimes quite overturning them and helping to bring about a "step forward" in the "liberation" of the individual from moral constraint. Yet again and again in the history of English letters the very reverse has been the case:—licentiousness has been the prevailing spirit of the age, while the literary genius has stood out against it, and sometimes effected a real change in public attitudes. Such a state of things is quite natural, for it is the man of high sensibility and refined perceptions who is most offended by what is ugly, obscene, gross or coarse.

Indeed, the liberal notion of a "continuous progress" away from decency, morality and restraint led by the artist and the intellectual might well be stood on its head to give a much truer picture of the 18th and 19th centuries. The progressive tendency of those centuries, following the unbridled licentiousness of the 17th century, was toward higher standards of refinement and delicacy, and the prime movers, the makers of the "great Strides" were figures of outstanding literary, intellectual and artistic genius. It was not, perhaps, a "continuous progress", but it was a constant tendency which only ended with the virulent anti-romantic movement of the 20th century.

Nor is it unreasonable to suppose that if there is to be—as there must be—a recovery from the unbridled licentiousness of the 20th century, it will be partly moved by the outstanding literary figures of the new century and will—in some form or another—have something of the character of a new romanticism.

The importance of the first English romantics in the development of the new sensibility is testified to by Gosse, in a voice already curdled by the anti-Victorian sneer of the '90s:

To all the principal writers of this first generation, not merely vice, but coarseness and licence

were abhorrent, as they had been to no earlier race of Englishmen. The rudeness of the 18th century gave way to a cold refinement, exquisitely crystal in its highest expressions, a little empty and inhuman in its lower ones. What the Continental nations unite to call our "hypocrisy", our determination not to face the ugly side of nature at all, to deny the existence of the unseemly instincts, now came to the front.

It is, of course, but a short step from this attitude of Gosse's to the 20th-century anti-romantic *cultus* of the unseemly instincts, of the ugly side of nature and of ugliness in general, which goes by the misleading but psychologically revealing name of "realism".

The literary and intellectual origins of "English hypocrisy" (or "Victorian hypocrisy") as the English prefer to call it—"hypocrisy", in both cases, being the insult that vice gives to virtue) may be traced back at least to Addison and Steele and the great journals of the early 18th century. As C.S. Lewis said:—"That sober code of manners under which we still live to-day, in so far as we have any code at all, and which foreigners call hypocrisy, is in some important degree a legacy from the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*."

Of Addison's influence upon the development of the English moral climate, Lord Macaulay, in his *Essay on Addison*, wrote:

There still lingered in the public mind a pernicious notion that there was some connexion between genius and profligacy, between the domestic virtues and the sullen formality of the Puritans. That error it is the glory of Addison to have dispelled. . . So effectually, indeed, did he retort on vice the mockery that had recently been directed against virtue, that, since his time, the open violation of decency has always been considered among us as the mark of a fool."

One may, indeed, discern a progress in manners and morals from the licentiousness of the "age of reason" to the delicacy of the high Victorian age; a progress which was not wholly lost until the second half of the 20th century. Richardson, the creator of the modern novel and the instigator of the cult of Sensibility which swept Britain and Europe and was the great precursor of the emotional side of Romanticism, led in his novels what was virtually a moral crusade against the licence of the age and in favour of purity, modesty and virtue. It is true that his arch-rival, Fielding, took quite the opposite side, but there is no doubt which of the two spoke with the voice of the future, both morally and artistically. Sensibility was to blossom into romantic passion, while Richardson's morality passed away only because it was superseded by the higher conceptions of the Victorian age. As Professor

William Lyon Phelps of Yale University wrote in the early years of the 20th century:—

However salutary may have been the moral effect of *Pamela* on the age in which and for which it was written, we feel that in this particular respect it has now outlived its usefulness. In short, a keener moral sense and a juster appreciation of moral values make us repudiate it.<sup>2</sup>

The religious revival of the 19th century was closely bound up with romanticism: the 18th-century dislike of "enthusiasm" was hostile to such revivals. Methodism was founded by John Wesley, a high Tory, high churchman and Jacobite sympathiser, a man outside the rationalist/Whig orthodoxy of his century and who was aware of the value of "passion". The Oxford Movement was deeply influenced by romanticism and mediævalism.

It is perhaps a little one-sided to say that romanticism gave to the Victorian age everything that was bearable:—that industrialism, utilitarianism and bourgeois vulgarity were the natural and inevitable results of the political and intellectual movements of the 17th and 18th centuries, while all that was rich and beautiful and fine, splendid and chivalrous in Victorianism, as well as all that was homely and decent and demure and noble and honourable, was the result of romanticism and of the religious revival. A little one-sided, but not so very far from the truth. Certainly it may not unreasonably be conjectured that if there had been no romanticism and no religious revival, the tendencies of the 18th century might well have led on to an age of unrestrained cynicism, insane licentiousness, gross vulgarity and unrelieved utilitarian drabness—to an age, in short, very like the late 20th century—the best part of a century earlier than they did; and had this happened, the 20th century itself may well have been even bleaker, more sterile and more barbarous than it actually was.

It may be objected that we have presented so far a rather one-sided view of romanticism—one which concentrates upon its virtues while ignoring its darker side. We admit this to be true; our intention has been to provide a corrective to the equally one-sided view of literary history which is more commonly presented. The romantic movement is by no means above criticism, but let us be aware that the left-wing or liberal "reading" of romanticism is a part of the modernist/progressist interpretation of history, and that the more tenebrous aspects of the movement have consequently received a disproportionate amount of attention.

Let us recall that romanticism had its ori-

gins in the elevation of the mediæval spirit above the drab rationalism of the 18th century. The very word has its origin in mediæval romance, and Heine defined romanticism as "the re-awakening of the life and thought of the Middle Ages". In architecture, romanticism meant, from the mid-18th century onwards, the neo-Gothic style as pioneered by Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill. In short, romanticism was, at root a return to tradition; a return to a world which was not restricted to the four walls of earthly reason, but which had heights above it and depths below it. It was a revolt against the smug, shallow laicism of the "Enlightenment", and if it was, in many cases, a misconceived revolt, and, in some cases, one which led to evils and excesses worse than those against which it was directed, that was because it was a revolt which lacked intellectual foundation and which did not possess a traditional doctrine to underpin its traditional sentiment. As the contemporary Persian traditionalist philosopher, Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr has put it:—"Whatever service the romantic movement rendered in re-discovering mediæval art or the beauty of virgin nature, it could not affect the current of science nor add a new dimension within science itself by which man would be able to understand those aspects of nature that 17th-century science and its aftermath had failed to consider."<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless, that sternest of traditionalists, Mr. Frithjof Schuon, while fully cognisant of the weight of such criticisms, warns:—"One must not, however, too readily cast aspersions upon the romantic aesthetes, who had the merit of possessing a certain discernment, as well as a nostalgia that was very understandable in a world that was sinking into a cold, inhuman ugliness."<sup>4</sup>

More than this, many of the romantics "were keenly conscious of the chasm between the transient, commonsense world of appearances and the eternal, infinite realm of ideal truth, goodness and beauty which man can perceive by means of the imagination."<sup>5</sup> Whether the "imagination" is the correct faculty for perceiving such eternal realities depends rather upon what one means by the term<sup>6</sup>, but Coleridge in his distinction between *fancy* and *imagination* certainly intended to distinguish a higher faculty from a lower; the higher being one which could perceive the transcendent, eternal truth of things, the lower, *fancy*, being largely identical with what people today mean when they speak of "imagination".

However this may be, it is precisely the per-

ception of, or belief in, eternal, transcendent verities which ultimately distinguishes tradition from modernism; for modernism is, by definition, the belief that nothing exists outside the flux of time and that, therefore, change and progress are all-in-all.

For us, perhaps the quintessential Statement of what we mean by Romanticism is contained in those lines of Yeats's:—"We were the last romantics, took for theme/Traditional sanctity and loveliness."

Does this mean that a traditionalist must take the side of romanticism in the historical antithesis between romanticism and classicism? It does not. When it is protested that romanticism "allowed a self-indulgent *laissez faire* to triumph over the discipline of genuine spiritual effort" or when Sir Charles Petrie speaks of the "loose thinking and loose living" of many romantics and points out that "Charles Maurras showed how intimately the decay of the old classical spirit was connected with the spread of democratic doctrines"<sup>1</sup>, we are fully in sympathy; nor do we fail to respect the order, discipline and formality of the classical spirit. The fact is that the historical movements termed romanticism and classicism were two complementary half-truths, each containing much that was good and each containing deep-seated errors—errors rooted in the great intellectual narrowing and impoverishment of the "Enlightenment" which the classical spirit—by no means without exceptions—accepted and which the romantic spirit was unable fundamentally to reject. Within each could arise, on the one hand, traditionalist souls who largely set aside the errors, and, on the other hand, subversives who were primarily concerned with the errors and who pressed them to extremes:—yet very few, even of the latter group, were without considerably more of the traditional spirit than is possessed by most modern conservatives.

So why are we called Romantics? Mr. Gwynne says "presumably you chose the name 'Romantic' advisedly," but I am not sure that we did. It is a name that "just grew"; nonetheless, we do not feel that it is by any means an inappropriate one—provided one does not associate it too directly with the historical movement of the same name. What, after all, does one mean if one calls some one a "romantic" in these days? Does not one imply an attachment to the past, a love of beauty and tradition, a hatred of the ugly, tawdry, utilitarian nastiness of the modern world? Perhaps, taking us as an intellectual current, "traditionalist" had been a better

term:—but we are not merely an intellectual current. For some Romantics, the intellectual side of traditionalism is of little importance, yet they are still Romantics. If a certain lightness and whimsy is implied in the term, who can deny that such lightness and whimsy is part of our style?

Above all, the term "Romantic" implies one who does not accept the drab, pedestrian, materialistic squalor of the modern mentality. It implies one to whom such words as *honour* and *chivalry* still mean something—and something of the first importance. It implies one who wishes life to be grand and dramatic, beautiful and noble, charming and gay. It implies one who, whatever others may do, has determined to disdain the grovelling mire of modernism and to live—as far as is humanly possible—according to those ideals; or perish in the attempt.

Yes; we are Romantics.

#### NOTES

- 1 Gosse, *Modern English Literature*, Heinemann 1897, pp. 303-304.
- 2 Phelps, *Essays on Books*, Macmillan 1922, p. 85.
- 3 Nasr, *Man and Nature*, Unwin 1968, p. 73.
- 4 Schuon, "Foundations of an Integral Aesthetics", *Studies in Comparative Religion*, Vol. 10, No. 3, Summer 1976, p. 130.
- 5 L.R. Furst, *Romanticism*, Methuen 1969, p. 37.
- 6 An interesting discussion of this question from a traditional standpoint is contained in Professor Elemire Zolla's monograph *The Uses of Imagination and the Decline of the West*, 1978. See also H. Corbin, *Muadus Imaginalis*, 1972. Both are obtainable from Golgonooza Press, 3, Cambridge Drive, Ipswich, Suffolk.
- 7 Furst, *op. cit.* p. 64.
- 8 Quoted in Robin Davies, "Radicalism and Tradition", *The Scorpion* No. 8, Spring 1983, p. 12.

#### Correspondence

### High Demeanour

MADAM, I am interested to note that Mr. Jared Taylor and his American friends keep a commonplace book, as you are always advising your pupils to do. I especially liked the quotation from Mr. Philip Guedalla which said "The perpetual proximity of inferiors is a rare school of high demeanour." But—um—what does it mean? I mean, does it mean that having servants in the house keeps one on one's best behaviour, or does it mean that seeing the dreadful oiks in the street keeps reminding one how dreadful it is to be a dreadful oik and thereby makes one strive to be a better de-

meanoured sort of merchant, if you follow my line of reasoning? I hope I do not sound a pest, but when I was a child I puzzled for weeks over whether *carpet slippers* meant slippers made from carpet (like carpet bags—only slippers, of course) or slippers for walking on carpets in; and this has me in just the same state. I beg you, therefore, to rescue, YR. OBT. SERV. MISS P. P. TURNER. As a matter of fact, dear child, it does not mean either of those things. Mr. Guedalla was saying that a noble caste settled among an alien and inferior race of natives must needs develop the highest standards of comportment. If this is true we may expect exceptionally high standards from our own Romantics, may we not?

#### Periodical Literature

### Within Glossy Covers

by Miss Lucinda Traill

I HAVE recently become aware of two large, glossy colour magazines. Not a thing, you might think, to boast about openly in print. Not in this year of grace, with large, glossy colour magazines being what they have become over the last few darkened decades.

Nonetheless, I think *This England* and *Victoria* are worthy of some consideration: not necessarily each for the same reasons. The two are, in fact, very different in many respects. *This England*, as you might expect, is English; *Victoria* is American. *This England*, despite its large circulation and wide range of contributors, is essentially a one-man business; *Victoria* is published by the huge and horrid Hearst Corporation, which owns half the magazines in America. *Victoria* was founded relatively recently; *This England* was founded in The Year of the Skunk, 1968, as a conscious and deliberate reaction against all that those four digits represent.

Let us turn first to *This England*. Its editor-publisher, Mr. Roy Faiers, says of its origin: "After many years as a newspaper reporter, during which time I had written many articles covering every tawdry facet of life as it was in those days, I felt sure there had to be a better way of earning a living as a journalist without pandering to the searnier side of life." Mr. Faiers turned freelance and then launched a magazine serving his own county of Lincolnshire, appealing to people's interest in their local heritage and history. The success of this enterprise led to the founding of half a dozen

similar county magazines in other parts of England, from Devon to Norfolk and the Cotswolds. From this base was *This England* launched, as a magazine serving the whole country. It is difficult to say what sort of a magazine it is. It retains something of the flavour of a county or country magazine; there is a great deal of what is called "nostalgia"—which means an intelligent concern and sentiment for our past and traditions; it has many series on subjects like English County Regiments, Exploring English Surnames, and Parlour Poetry. There is a wonderful series on our soldier poets. There are pieces on English writers, artists and composers, pieces on the countryside, music hall and comic songs, English schools, English churches—in short, if the magazine is about anything in particular, it is about England in all her richness and variety. It is a popular general magazine of the type that ought to be common, but is not. If it concentrates a little more on the past than might be usual in a magazine of this sort, that is not so much a question of nostalgia as a tacit (and sometimes not so tacit) recognition of the fact that there is not very much worthwhile in "modern culture", whether "popular" or "high".

When *The Romantic* says that she is "the only magazine... which an Englishwoman can regard without the smallest suspicion of a blush or a shudder", she must except (along, of course, with Present Company) *This England*. One does not find canting journalese like "lifestyle" or "hassle" in *This England*. Not ever. One does not find foul language or bland acceptance of immorality. One does not find women called by surname alone, nor is one told that such and such a place is in "Cumbria", or that Huntingdon is in Cambridgeshire. You will never see a "Ms." in these pages, nor any of the other excrescences of modern pap-culture. Whatever one may think of the magazine, one will never be offended by it as one frequently is by other "respectable" publications like *The Spectator* or *The Sunday Telegraph*.

So is *This England* the (other) publication you have been looking for all your life? Of course it is a question of taste. It is a bit—well—folksy, which may put you off or may do the reverse. Some of my friends do not like any modern glossy colour magazine, either because they find them inherently unattractive, or because the genus has been ruined for them by association. The most consistent adverse comments I have had from friends are about the look of the thing: it does tend to show

countryside pictures with people in the most appalling modern clothes—bright plastic coats, for example, which modern people wear while appreciating the beauties of nature in order to ruin said beauties for any one else who might be present. The many illustrations by Mr. Colin Carr (of which the editor is proud and which are certainly very good of their kind) were considered too “earthy” by several friends. It should be said, however, that they are in a comic vein which has deep roots in the English tradition, and which has probably always been objected to by fastidious people like ourselves. I consider it charming that both sides are still in business. The covers are said to “look modern” which I think refers to the fact that they bleed to the edges (a rather disgusting-sounding technical term for a rather disgusting-looking thing. We will come to it in a minute). But since this happens nowhere else in the magazine I think it is a rare concession to commercial pressure.

Having said these things, one has said all that a reasonable chap could say against *This England*. The general look of the thing is very charming. Splendid pictures of English countryside and architecture, delightful reproductions of works of art and of old photographs and lots of other delights—old embroidered postcards and greetings cards, playbills and other bygone ephemera, all reproduced in splendid colour to accompany appropriate articles. The large full-page and double-page colour photographs, instead of bleeding to the edges as they do in other modern magazines—this means that the picture goes right to the edge of the page with no border, making it look particularly grooshy and modern—have charming colour-toned borders which give them a much more traditional appearance. The slick and nasty full-page advertisements which adorn the other glossies simply are not here. Mr. Faiers has taken the bold—almost quixotic—decision not to accept any large-scale advertising, partly, presumably, in order to maintain the unique look of the periodical and also because he wishes to be free of advertising pressures. This sinister phrase seems to imply that advertisers would use their financial power over a magazine to bring it in line with the modern *ethos*. Perhaps that is part of the reason all other magazines are so uniformly unpleasant.

The whole question of *de facto* censorship and modernist control of communication is raised in a particularly striking form by the very existence of *This England*. As Mr. Faiers says, its circulation dwarfs that of most other

magazines. It is certainly about or above the million mark and possibly (depending on number of readers per issue—and it is definitely a family, or extended-family magazine) much higher. Mr. Faiers himself estimates it at about 2½ million and he may well be right. Now, in a genuine free market you would expect a publication of this size and popularity to be available at every newsagent's shop and kiosk and chain-shop in the country, would you not? In theory, yes. In practice, I am willing to bet that not one reader in fifty has ever seen it in any shop, nor one in a dozen ever heard of it. This is certainly very strange. It is a commercial magazine, freely available to all distributors and retail chains, and with a high circulation and proven popularity. We can only conclude that exoteric commercial considerations are not the only ones which rule the chains and distributors in deciding what shall and what shall not be allowed to reach the public: that certain canons of conformity to the degenerate standards of the modern world are necessary in order for any means of communication to be allowed inside the normal channels of distribution. *This England* is not strongly critical of modernism; it is not in any way political or theoretical; it is simply a decent, old fashioned, ordinarily patriotic family magazine: but clearly even that is not allowed through the net of modernist censorship.

If *This England*, virtually outside the regular distribution network, selling through a very limited number of shops and by post, can amass a circulation which most other magazine publishers can only envy, what would be its circulation if it were allowed to compete fairly? We cannot know, but we can make an educated guess.

What this proves beyond doubt is that the generally-accepted dictum that modern publications feed the public on nothing but loose-mouthed modern bilge because “that is what people want today” is simply a lie. Some people may want that—largely because they have been conditioned to want it by being given nothing else—but there is a large—nay, a huge—potential market for decent, upright, old-fashioned English fare. A market which not only is not being exploited—as it would be under genuine free-market conditions—but is forcibly prevented from being exploited. I for one find that sinister.

*Victoria* is a different kettle of fish altogether. It is distributed from almost every newsagent in America and is even available at something called “super-market check-outs” of which

there are apparently a lot. It claims to be one of the publishing success-stories of the decade. Certainly it seems to be very widely known in both the British and the republican portions of North America, because numerous correspondents have sent us copies from all over the demi-continent, thinking we might find it of interest, as, indeed, we do.

As the name suggests, the magazine attempts to reflect a neo-Victorian *miroir*. It adopts slogans such as “a return to loveliness” and “a new reverence for tradition”. Unaccustomed as I am to the perusal of coloured glossy periodicals, my first feeling on leafing through it was one of bewilderment. Unlike *This England*, there is something particularly modern in the design and lay-out which strikes the unpractised (or innocent) eye as chaotic. I remarked to Mr. Faiers that the effect was like a bright-pastel kaleidoscope. Something too strange and dizzying to even conceive of actually reading. One would not know quite how to do it. It would be like wading through candy-floss or climbing a greased pole. Indeed, it was not until I had looked through two or three issues over a period of several months that I was actually able to read one properly.

All the main pictures bleed to the edges, sometimes with multiple insets. Many of the pictures have a curious grainy or gauzy effect, which I actually find rather pleasant and a little reactionary, but it does tend to add to the general sense of phantasmagoric confusion when combined with other modernistic techniques. There are lots of advertisements, of course, some reasonably tastefully in tune with the spirit of the thing, others clashing violently.

As the senses settle down, one can see that some of the pictures and words are really rather nice. Many of the faces are very modish-urban-modern in a way that even the most modern pictures in *This England* never are. On the other hand, there is never anything quite as jarring as *This England*'s yellow, red and blue plastic walking-coats. We are in much more sophisticated company here. Curiously, *Victoria* is also folksy, but in a very different way. In *This England* it is perfectly genuine. Too genuine for some of us! In *Victoria* it is the folksiness of people who have long since left all such things behind them and would rather like to recover them again—but without, of course, giving up any “modern convenience” either physical or mental.

To an English eye there is a great aura of *phoniness* about the whole thing. Every room looks like a stage-set, every person like a

mannequin and the writing could either have been written by people with a genuine feeling for old-fashioned things, but who have been half-saturated by grooshy adspak; or just as easily they might have been written by hacks who are told to “give this one a sloppy, sentimental, old-time touch, willya?” One's confidence in the *bona fides* of the venture is not increased by the fact that the editorial staff (mostly female) style themselves “Ms.” and address oneself in the same way even when one has indicated one's proper style.

This, as I say, is how it tends to strike the English eye, and I think, on the whole, that the English eye is wrong. I think the thing is genuine—or at any rate, as genuine as most Americans know how to be about tradition. It is not that Americans “have no history”. They had the Victorian era just as much as we did, but the modern world does seem to invade them more completely; to be all-in-all; the only world they can conceive of. Another problem is the overpowering American cult of *positiveness* which seems to dull the critical faculty. There is never any sense that opting for one thing might mean rejecting, or even criticising, another; no understanding that even a slogan as innocuous as “a return to loveliness” implies the unloveliness of the modern world.

If a number of modish Americans are capable of desiring some form of “return to tradition” in a way that similar Englishmen are not, it is perhaps because they do not see the choices involved, the sharp either/or which is immediate to the English mind. I am not saying that the English mind is always right in this, nor the American always wrong. There is a whole section of educated Englishmen who will immediately say to any Romantic: “So you want to bring back child-labour” (or some other evil of the past). Of course we do not, but it is the immediate thought of many Englishmen, and not necessarily very hostile ones. I do not think many Americans would ever think this sort of thing. Similarly, I doubt if *This England* would have been stifled in America. The commercial/communications complex would not have seen it as a challenge to modernism—but then neither would any one else, so it would not have been a challenge to modernism. The “Ms.”-calling *Victorians* are a splendid example of the phenomenon. They just do not see the inconsistency.

Does all this mean that *Victoria* and all that it represents is merely a fad like tubular steel furniture or stripped pine? It is hard to tell. Articles from *Newsweek* and other serious-ish American magazines circulated by



*Victoria's* advertising department lay stress on the deeper social and psychological causes behind a Victorian revival which is supporting no less than 1,500 firms providing imitation Victorian fittings from tin ceilings to "pedestal sinks" (i.e. handbasins). "Victorian design is really a prop for changing attitudes. There is a search for a community and a civility ... that is seen as part of life 100 years ago. People want that back," they say. A return to strong "patriarchal" family life; parlour games (of a modern sort), elaborate dinner parties and a partial rejection of television culture are implied in the New Victorian cult for at least some of its affluent American followers. A search for some sort of hierarchical distinction and a rejection of the democratic implications of the modern style is not mentioned, but we suspect it must be there even if not fully consciously.

How serious it all is is another question entirely. *Victoria* seems like a paradigm of the situation. Victorian sentiment and pure groosh in about equal parts. Uncritical acceptance of modern individualism pervades all. For example, a charming piece about an old girls' school makes much of how " quaint " its rules seem to "us" and notes that most such schools have since relaxed their rules as to dress, "leaving girls to develop their own sense of style"; quite unaware that a return to rules would be an inherent part of any real neo-Victorianism. It is easy to see the groosh as the essence of the thing and the Victorianism as a mere decoration which might be changed for something else tomorrow. It is also possible to see the groosh dropping away, leaving a more genuine Victorian sentiment. The lack of a strong either/or is not necessarily a disadvantage. A new sensibility must needs develop gradually, supplanting the old bit by bit; never at any point seeming too radical or threatening, at least in its "mainstream" manifestations. Inverse Fabianism, in fact: the same process which has transformed and distorted Western civilisation over the present century, working in a new direction. Of course, a more pure and coherent traditional thought will also be needed, lying behind the superficial changes, even as the Socialist theoretician stood behind the liberal developments of this century, providing them with their ultimate intellectual justification (which is why the collapse of Socialism is undermining the modernist spirit in every sphere, including interior decoration); but for most people the revolution (literally: *turning back*) will begin in gentle, piecemeal, often trivial-seeming ways. These are the steps which translate a hierarchical, re-

actionary sensibility gradually from the realm of the unthinkable to the realm of the possible.

I have no desire to press the point too hard. I merely suggest that, as the certainties of modernism and the *dommées* of the post-war world crumble slowly but inexorably, a return to traditional thought and sensibility looks increasingly like the *only* possibility. This may be how it begins.

*This England*, quarterly, is available at £12-0s-0d per annum from *This England*, P.O. Box 52, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire.

### Correspondence

## A Vision of Equality

MADAM, I was delighted with Miss Trill's piece on her motor-carriage and the ordeal of being compelled to drive a native vehicle. I had the same rather beastly experience myself not long ago and am still recovering from the æsthetic shock. I found it curious, however, that Miss Trill did not mention (although she did imply) what for me was one of the most humiliating aspects of the business. When one drives a decent car one, of course, looks down upon the natives crawling close to the ground in their dust-licking Ford Grockles or B.M.W. Hunchbacks. Even the latest apologies for Rolls Royces are humped over. They have, it is true, a shade more dignity of line, but that in a way makes them all the more contemptible—like a duke's son who still walks upright because he is not quite aware that he is doing it, but wears jeans and affects dark 'I's. One looks down, as I say, upon these disgusting grovellers of the roads, without giving the matter a thought. It is natural and normal that one should look down upon them. Where else would one look to find such things?

Being forced, like Miss Trill, to drive one of the beasts for a short time, it is distressing to find oneself actually *on a level* with all the red and yellow and metallic-aquamarine that befools our byways. One suddenly gets a sort of psychological revelation of how a democrat must feel, or how a liberal looks at life. It is not a pleasant feeling.

While I was immersed in these morbid sensations of equality, a real car passed me. It towered, as it seemed, many feet above me, its roof lost in the empyrean. I gave a jaunty wave, as is my wont on passing a fellow real car, but of course the owner did not even see me. I seemed merely one of the *pollot*. The gleaming vision of stateliness and splendour (though it had only been an ordinary-ish car in

its day) passed on, almost as if something from a higher plane of being had momentarily become visible as it went about its celestial business.

"So that," I thought, "is how one appears to the natives"; and, contemplating the resumption of my true vehicle, I was flushed with a glow of beneficence at the thought that one was bringing a momentary glimpse of truth and splendour into their drab and lowly existence.

Wherewith I am, Madam,  
YOUR SERVANT, MISS G. FALCONER

### Potations

## Life & Love & Laughter

by Miss Lucy Lockett

It was pleasing in the last number to see *The English Magazine*, albeit briefly, eschewing that vein of frivolity which her sincerest well-wishers cannot but deplore as detracting from the profundity of the philosophic teaching which she has for these benighted times and concentrating her majestic attention upon the more serious matters of life.

I refer, of course, to the piece on cocktails. As one would expect of a periodical of this standing, the piece, though regrettably brief, was utterly sound. Well, almost sound. There was one error of doctrine which many readers must have found deeply troubling. Under the heading "Blonde Bombshell Cocktail" appeared a drink which, while closely related, was in fact not a Blonde Bombshell at all. What it was was a Cowboy Cocktail (*vide The Savoy Cocktail Book*, p.52). The true Blonde Bombshell is constructed as follows:

### BLONDE BOMBHELL COCKTAIL

2 glasses whisky, 1 glass cream, 1 glass syrup  
Shake well and strain into cocktail glasses

Readers may be interested to know that the Blonde Bombshell is not as new as one might assume, for it was not originally named after Miss Wonderful, but after her earlier incarnation, Wondergirl, and dates back to the early '80s (readers interested in Wondergirl ought jolly well to join the Friends of the Romantic because I hear that material from the original Wondergirl comic will be made available as one of the various souvenirs which the Friends are given from time to time). The Blonde Bombshell Cocktail is sometimes called a

Booby (because the initials are B.B.C.) and sometimes a Hot Milk Shake—not because it is warmed up, which, of course, it *never* is, but using the word *hot* as in *hot music*.

Syrup, by the way, is a favourite ingredient of Romantic cocktails, because we all have such baby sweet teeth. It is just ordinary sugar syrup. Melt sugar in hot water—lots of sugar, so that it is thick and sticky. Let it cool and pour it into a bottle. Keep a crystal jug of it on the cocktail tray. Syrup of course, is not an actual innovation of the Empire. Cocktails have used it before our time. What really is a Romantic innovation—what Romantics have given to the world and will be remembered for long after the world has returned to civilisation and the Romantic Movement has ceased to be necessary—is the use in cocktails of Barratts sherbet. Yes, that coking white stuff that comes in the yellow tubes. This innovation, which is probably the only really significant technological advance of the 20th century, has made possible the Dolly Bombshell, which is constructed as follows:

### DOLLY BOMBHELL COCKTAIL

2 glasses whisky, 1 glass white wine, 1 glass syrup, 2 glasses cream, 1 tsp sherbet  
Shake well and strain into cocktail glasses

This cocktail is it. Some people call this a Hot Milk Shake, too. Now I am going to reveal one of the most potent secrets of Romantic life. This too is a purely Romantic contribution to human culture and wellbeing. The Bombshells are what give the Romantiquette her sweetness, her sensitivity and her delicate beauty, but what is it that gives her her *zing*? Why is she always full of jol. and quite unaffected by the drabness of Johnny Native and Elsie Twenty? Why is she a walking repository of pep just before dinner when the types are off flagging somewhere in typeland? Because she has only just arisen from a refreshing night's sleep? Well, partly; but mostly because she has discovered the *fountain of youth*. The name of this cocktail comes from an absolutely pipping song written by jiggered-if-I-know, and sung by the inimitable Hutch, entitled "Babes in the Wood". The germane lines are:

*They found that the Fountain of Youth*

*Is a mixture of gin and vermouth.*

Now, this obviously involves pronouncing "vermouth" in a rather odd way, which I take to be American; but I think even Miss Scott Robinson would grit and bear it for the sake of a work of art of this depth and significance. In fact I know she would, because I have seen her

put away—well, never mind that. The point is that whenever you are in need of vril, trill, and effervescence this is the receipt to follow:

#### FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH COCKTAIL

2 glasses gin, 1 glass Italian vermouth  
1 glass syrup

Shake well and Strain into cocktail glasses

Deceptively simple, what? But don't let it fool you, this is the business; the early-evening *sine qua jolly old non*. It is possible to build a sweet version by reversing the quantities of g. and v. Not nearly so good, but some people seem to prefer it,

Finally, let me leave you with one cocktail which is not an Imperial Innovation, but is too good not to mention. It is called the Planter's Cocktail and is constructed after this wise:

#### PLANTER'S COCKTAIL (No. 2)

2 glasses Jamaica rum, 1 glass lemon juice  
1 glass syrup

Shake well and Strain into cocktail glasses.

Th-th-th-that's all, folks!

#### Correspondence

### Letters on Words

MADAM, Miss Scott-Robinson, in "The Decanter", is encouragingly sanguine about the possibility of our English language's remaining unchanged by permanent incursions from modern cant-terms. I hope she is right, but while the language has in the past shrugged off the majority of sub-standard invaders, two things seem to have changed: first the fact that international Standards of English are no longer set by Oxford and London, but by New York and Los Angeles; and secondly, as Miss Scott-Robinson has herself noted, "serious" writers now use ridiculous neologisms as if they were real words as soon as they are coined. Will there not soon grow up a generation which really knows nothing else and cannot tell cant from English?

YOURS &c. MR. S. BRIARS

Miss Scott-Robinson replies: I do not think there will grow up a generation which cannot distinguish cant. Intelligent young people today do seem to know cant from English. Any one who reads decent literature can soon gain a sense of what is and what is not good, resonant, language with depth and dignity. Most cant words gain their power from their very slickness and modishness and are for that very reason subject to quick decay. To take an example, every one

over a certain age can remember a time when the terms highbrow, lowbrow and middlebrow seemed (to the natives) absolutely indispensable for everyday intelligent discourse. Most educated people used the terms frequently and would have found it hard to manage without them. To-day (despite the fact that they have not been replaced with any exact equivalents), they are close to being obsolete. They certainly have a very dated and even rather ridiculous ring, even to the sort of people who are not accustomed to laugh at neologisms when they are in fashion. Rest assured that most modern cant will go the same way within very much less than a hundred years, leaving the vast bulk of late-20th-century prose, which has embraced it so uncritically, high and dry on a sand-bank of dated ludicrousness.

MADAM, I note from "The Decanter" that your lexicographical correspondent regards Mr. Partridge as an authority. This being the case, I wonder that you should insist upon the use of the word "editress" which that authority has (correctly in my view) termed "an infelicity".

YR. OBL. SERV. MR. T. PHILMORE

One must remember that Mr. Partridge made that remark in the late '30s. Things have changed a great deal since then, and it can be argued that one must move with the times. With the ugly, politicised, de-sexing of the language perpetrated by so many (apparently some modern actresses call themselves "actors" these days!) it is more necessary than it once was to use a language which firmly reinforces those differentiations which the new Philistines are trying so hard to blur. It may also be reasonably argued that one should ignore such things altogether and use the same terminology one would have used at the time of Mr. Partridge's comment. We find the use of "editress" both charming and piquant, but we will refrain from issuing any formal edict upon the matter, thus leaving others free to use which form they prefer.

MADAM, I was pleased to note Miss Scott-Robinson's comment on what she calls the geographical apostrophe in your last number. This ungainly usage has not hitherto been noted and criticised to my knowledge. Another form of it is that applied to people rather than places. In international sporting competitions, for example, journalists and others are lately wont to refer to "England's Bill Scroggins" or to "France's Pierre Mouton". Perhaps the most amusing example is that of the Third Programme announcer (what a sad case of a once-proud breed stricken with galloping degeneracy!) who spoke of "Sweden's Franz Berwald".

Idiotic as the whole thing is, I suppose there must be a reason for it; and the reason, I suspect, lies in the field of international sport, where it is most often used, and whence I believe it originates. It may well have its roots in a, perhaps unconscious, sense of accuracy; for the men who these days represent England in such contests very often have no more English blood than a Zulu chieftain, nor have they assimilable European blood capable of merging with the English Stream over the generations. They are certainly 'England's players, in the sense that they play for England, but they are not, except by what is called a legal fiction, 'English: nor can they ever be.

YR. HUMBLE SERV. MISS P. CAVENDISH

## SHELMERDINE

### BY MISS PRISCILLA LANGRIDGE

#### CHAPTER VI

#### SIGNS OF THINGS TO COME

SHELMERDINE emerged unscathed from the affair of the VI form piano. The piano itself was successfully returned to the Music Room, and, while the twins and Alison were punished for absenting themselves from the walk home (Miss Carstairs had assumed that they had been in church for the service and there seemed no reason to disappoint her), Shelmerdine was considered too new and inexperienced in school ways to be fully responsible. The others were much castigated for leading her astray.

Nonetheless, she was acutely conscious that her Hope Carrington Cup gambit had been decisively trumped, if the reader will forgive me for mixing my Hoyle. She was determined to regain her position; but in the meanwhile she regarded the piano affair with unstinting admiration. On Monday evening she told the story to Flavia and was particularly impressed to discover that it required very little retouching in the cause of dramatic effect. This was, in fact, its first retelling, for the Inner Circle had agreed to tell nobody for a few days—just in case—knowing how these things spread. But Flavia was so out of touch that Shelmerdine felt that in her case there could be no harm.

Flavia's reaction to the story surprised Shelmerdine somewhat. Her luminescent blue eyes grew huge and round as she listened. At first Shelmerdine thought that she was shocked or horrified, but she was not. She was enthralled. As Shelmerdine finished, her whole being seemed to glow with excitement.

"How glorious," she said.

"It was rather a show."

"And imagine cozening Miranda like that. I bet it was your idea to put the piano on the dais."

Shelmerdine smiled. Jolly of Flavia to spot her one bit of credit in the affair. "Bit of a sitting duck, I'm afraid, but it was jinky."

"How glorious," repeated Flavia.

"Well, well, you surprise me, Shorty. I didn't think you'd particularly swoop for this sort of business."

Flavia said nothing in reply to this. Perhaps she was surprised herself, though there was really no reason to be. Everything in which Shelmerdine was involved was bathed, for Flavia, in a romantic glow; but beyond that, the swashbuckling spirit lay never far beneath her quiet exterior.

Shelmerdine filled the silence by casting her eyes over Flavia's pictures. Practically every inch of wall in her tiny room which was not covered with books was covered with pictures. None was very large. They ranged from very small to medium-small. Most of them looked old and often rather foreign; perhaps east European. Shelmerdine was very far from being an expert on such things, but from the frames alone it was clear that some of them were very valuable.

Flavia followed Shelmerdine's glance. "Do you like this picture?" she asked, taking down the one at which Shelmerdine happened to be looking at the time. It showed a shepherdess leading sheep upon a hill. In the background was a country town. It was either mediæval or early Renaissance, according to Shelmerdine's guess. Everything in it was exceptionally clear and bright, yet at the same time the whole was pervaded with a wonderful tranquillity. The whole picture, frame included, was only a little larger than the palm of Shelmerdine's hand, yet it seemed like a little world that one might walk into. Shelmerdine thought that its life was due not only to the skill of the artist, but also to long and loving contemplation.

"I've had it since I was a little child," said Flavia.

"It is very lovely," said Shelmerdine sincerely, although she normally had no great appreciation for the visual arts.

"It is yours," said Flavia.

"No," said Shelmerdine firmly, replacing it on the wall.

"Why not?" asked Flavia, her eyes misting over as they had on that first night. "Surely you are not one of those who finds it hard to accept a gift."

"No," replied Shelmerdine, "but I should

not appreciate it nearly as well as you do."

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The moon was nearly full and very bright. Its light penetrated the curtains in Shelmerdine's dorm, so that a pale light was reflected into her cubicle from the ceiling.

"Bother," she thought. "I could have done without a moon tonight. Still, it helps me to keep awake until I leave."

That in itself was no small blessing, for while lights-out was at nine thirty, it was fully half past eleven before Shelmerdine thought it prudent to dress herself and tiptoe out of the dormitory, down the stairs and through a side door into the cool night air. She kept to the grass to avoid the crunching gravel of the path until she was outside the main gate and then began her brisk walk into town. Certainly it was fun by moonlight, even if it did add to the risk a little.

"You must admit," she had said to the twins at breakfast, that I did you proud with my last dare. Now I think it is fair to say that you owe me a good'un to match it. A triple-X corker."

This thought must also have occurred to the twins, because they were ready with a dare that was at least triple-X. Possibly quadruple.

As she arrived in town, the last patrons were leaving the Hare and Hounds. A local bobby touched his helmet to them. Clearly they were not too particular about the licensing laws here, bother them. Shelmerdine kept to the shadows. She checked the site where a new stone building was under construction. Yes. There was the ladder she would need to borrow, but there was no point in taking it yet. She would have to give the landlord and landlady of the Hare and Hounds time to clear up and get to bed.

A stroll about the town seemed to be in order. A discreet one, though. Wouldn't do to be spotted.

Everything was closed, which made for a fairly dull walk until she came to Quincy's. Quincy's was the town's only casino. It stayed open until the small hours. Shelmerdine had never been attracted by casinos in her own time, but she was intrigued to see what one might be like now. She might have thrown caution to the winds and given it a pop were it not for the certainty that, wearing her school macintosh, she would be thrown out.

She stood for some minutes watching the various patrons as they entered. They seemed very formal. She noticed that the silk hat was once more *de rigueur* with gentleman's evening wear. It was a little taller and thinner than it had been when it was last among us, return-

ing, in fact, toward its origins. She was able to study the style at some length on the head of one man who stood outside Quincy's during the whole period of her observation.

She was just deciding that it must be about time to set about her evening's business when she saw that the man was being joined by a young woman dressed all in black and with a black veil over her face. There was something distinctly familiar about the woman. For a moment, Shelmerdine could not place it; then, at once, she knew. Even though the couple were now disappearing up the stairs of the casino there was no doubt of it.

The young woman was Cara Leonie.

"Quelle rum go," thought Shelmerdine. "Is she meeting some sinister contact, or simply addicted to playing the tables? Or both? And what do I do about it? I can't get in. Probably wouldn't help if I did, and I'm bothered if I'll wait about for her to come out. Oh well, about my business, I suppose."

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"So you've really got it," said Dot as the Inner Circle made its way to its favourite tree.

"Of course," replied Shelmerdine, "but I nearly didn't bother to bring it home. They're bigger than they look when you get them down, y'know."

They had ducked under the overhanging foliage to enter their natural tent, and there it was, standing on top of the wall and propped against the tree trunk. The sign of the Hare and Hounds.

"But isn't it splendid," said Carrie.

"I say! You chaps!" The voice was accompanied by the sound of heavy feet rushing towards their hideout. Hastily the four emerged. The owner of both voice and feet was Viola Dunwoody, a gawky but generally affable member of the Third. "The Head wants to see all of you right away. Sounds serious."

"Golliwogs!" said Alison as they hurried on their way. "She can't know about the sign, can she?"

#### Helpful Hints

### Imperial Cheques

MORE than one reader has commented upon the problem of bank cheques. However one keeps metric money out of one's discourse, is one not obliged to use it when making out cheques? The answer is, largely, no. Banks may fuss if you write out cheques including shillings, and certainly will if they include shillings and pence, but so long as you are dealing in whole numbers of pounds, there is

never any difficulty. Just write "£10-0-0"—never "£10.00". Dozens of Romantics, banking with all manner of different banks, do this all the time and we have never encountered so much as a raised eyebrow. If, as is often the case, some article should cost £9-19s or £9-19s-11d (or thereabouts) why not round up your cheque, give the tradesman the odd shilling and keep your life pure?

A recent donation received at this office had "Sixty guineas" in writing and £63-0-0 in figures. Again, there was no difficulty or comment from either bank. Prospective supporters should note that this can be done with twenty guineas or any multiple thereof!

### Some Comments on The English Magazine by Father Francis of the Motherhood of Our Lady

THE *Manchester Evening Post* is advertised as "a friend dropping in". I do not know whether it is or not, as it has never dropped in here; I do know that the local newspapers of this area, even more than those nationally distributed, are the very opposite of friends. I would experience discomfort to touch them; reading even their headlines is painful, showing just how much has been destroyed, how "local" now means a totally different area, and how heritage and identity have been abandoned—or more accurately, stolen. On occasion "local" newspapers are put through my door, in spite of my repeated requests—demands—that this not be done; I feel it as an invasion. How different the arrival of *The English Magazine*. Indeed a friend's dropping in. A paper which I can read without fear of more than an occasional cause for disturbance—and aware that comment on any such disturbance will not be ignored or explained away, but will be seriously considered, and, amazingly, acted upon. A paper, *mirabile dictu*, in which even the letter-writers are sound (so much so that often and again I have had to look at the end of a letter to make sure that it had not emanated from my own pen and its authorship been forgotten!)

It is, of course, not only the content which is so important. The words, the phrasing, the cadences of Sparrowhawk give pleasure regardless of their content, as would poetry in a foreign language, or non-descriptive music.

So many themes which have niggled are brought out and dissected: indeed the 1990s are a style, as recognisable, as Miss Traill comments, at a glance, as those of the 1960s and 1970s (a few moments of any film made in those decades, even a still photograph from such films, can be identified within a few years). The change is particularly noticeable among those who have enthusiasm for certain aspects of the past. A magazine produced by and for lovers of the 1950s publication the *Eagle* grates with its consistent 1990s view, even whilst it is praising the product of a previous period, to such an extent that I cannot read it, even to obtain the information it contains. It might be expected that a magazine for "old boys' book collectors" would be untainted by recent modishness, but alas the tone is the same.

A reader of these notes who did not know *The English Magazine* might believe it was more a didactic, a stern schoolmarm, rather than a friend. He might think it an organ for Mr. Growers and Disgusted of Cheltenham. In fact, it somehow manages to avoid the heavy hand of the former, whilst quite amazingly containing none of the bitter and acidic rancour that so many others who criticise all things "modern" seem unable to keep from their words. In doing these, it manages to be feminine, in the best sense, with a sweetness which makes welcome what could otherwise be heavy and indigestible.

In a way that truly lives up to the literal meaning of "magazine" it mixes whimsy (recently used as a criticism of it in a review) with wisdom, receipts with romantic love, social commentary with school fiction.

It is probable that many—perhaps most—Romantics are alone; alone does not necessarily and always mean lonely, but it probably means lonely some of the time. *The English Magazine* does so much in its small size to offer us an alternative world in which we are not alone, in which we can let down our guard, in which we can read without fear of corruption or pain.

I still cannot believe I shall not awake and find the whole of Perfect Publications a dream. Such things cannot happen—can they?

*The Struggle of our time is to concentrate, not to dissipate; to renew our association with traditional wisdom; to reestablish a vital connexion between the individual and the race. It is, in a word, a struggle against liberalism.* T. S. ELIOT  
*Real development is not leaving things behind, as on a road, but drawing life from them, as from a root.* G. K. CHESTERTON

## Ghost Writers

## Some Remarks on Dr. M.R. James & Mr. J. Sheridan Le Fanu by Miss Muriel Smith

THE fiftieth anniversary of a writer's death is quite commonly made the occasion for a reconsideration of his works. So it was with Mr. Le Fanu. After, as he tells us, a fairly long investigation, Dr. James was ready to bring out "a collection of forgotten tales by him, and of tales not previously known to be his". Dr. James hoped thereby both to gratify those who were already admirers of Mr. Le Fanu and also to win him new readers. The volume, *Madam Crowl's Ghost and Other Tales of Mystery* contains twelve stories, with a prologue and an epilogue by the editor. One story, "Squire Toby's Will", is ranked by some critics as the best that Mr. Le Fanu ever wrote: it has since appeared in more than one anthology. Another that crops up in anthologies, "The Dead Sexton", is, however, one that Dr. James missed, I believe the only one that has since come to light.

In the prologue, dated July 1923, Dr. James declares:—"He stands absolutely in the first rank as a writer of ghost stories. That is my deliberate verdict, after reading all the supernatural tales I have been able to get hold of."

At that date Dr. James had published twenty-two finely-wrought ghost stories, twenty collected in the three volumes, *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary*, *More Ghost Stories* and *A Thin Ghost and Others*, and two which were subsequently included in his fourth and last collection, *A Warning to the Curious*, of 1925.

A writer who has produced a small quantity of very careful work and is confronted with careless fecundity in his own general line can despise his rival, or admire. Dr. James was too generous-minded to sneer, and too modest. Moreover, reluctant as one must be to discuss other people's incomes, it is permissible to add that one notorious provocative of envy between writers was altogether absent: Dr. James was under no financial pressure. Barring scandalous misbehaviour, he would live comfortably on the charity of King Henry VI to the end of his days, the more comfortably, in a financial sense, for being a confirmed bachelor. He had been living on that charity from

the age of fourteen, as Colleger at Eton, King's-man, Fellow, Dean and Provost of King's, and now, finally, Provost of Eton.

In the epilogue, for the benefit of anyone new to Mr. Le Fanu's work, Dr. James picks out as specially recommended further reading, *In a Glass Darkly*, *Uncle Silas* and *The House by the Churchyard*:—"It is on these three volumes that I principally base the claim that I make for Le Fanu that he is one of the best story-tellers of the last age." Not indeed a faultless one:—"For one thing he is certainly a hasty and rather careless writer. His text admits of many small emendations, which shows him to have been a bad proof-reader: there are a certain number of definite mistakes and inconsistencies in the stories and you may often find sentences which are not only too long, but do not construe. That is one blemish, due, I cannot doubt, in part to the conditions under which he wrote—I mean the serial form which he employed for twelve out of his fourteen novels."

This charitable excuse, however, hardly covers the piece of shocking carelessness in the short story "An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street", which the editor of the *Dublin University Magazine* really should have picked up before publication in 1853. (Mr. Le Fanu himself owned and edited this periodical at one time, but that was later, from 1861 to 1869). The narrator and his cousin Tom have, as domestic coming in daily to attend to their needs, a spinster of fifty-two, living with her old mother. She, nearly eighty, is the source of information for the life and suicidal death of wicked old Judge Horrocks. In one place she is said to have known the house in the Judge's time, presumably about seventy years ago, in her childhood. Elsewhere, it is said that, when she was first married, she knew an old woman, then past eighty, who had been the Judge's housekeeper, was the mother of a child of whom the Judge was generally assumed to have been the father, and was, in those days "a rare buxom, fine-dressed woman". The first is the likelier version, since the old woman also gives some account of the tenants after the Judge's death, none of whom, she says, "ever had luck in it".

In 1929, as a recognised authority on the supernatural in fiction, Dr. James was invited to contribute to the Christmas Number of *The Bookman*. In his article, "Some Remarks on Ghost Stories", he criticises Mr. Algernon Blackwood's character John Silence for being over-technically occult. However, Dr. Hesselius, the great blot on *In a Glass Darkly*,

escapes any such criticism, though surely open to it. True, the slab of pseudo-scientific jargon which introduces each story can easily be skipped; there is nothing about Dr. Hesselius in the story proper in any of them except in "Green Tea", which is narrated in letters from Dr. Hesselius to a friend. This justly famous example of Mr. Le Fanu's 'not-quite ghost stories' is a powerful piece of writing which sticks in the mind, and you can forgive the cobbled-up ending. Nevertheless, that ending is really a shameful piece of cobbling up.

A character, surely, should have his own sufficient reason for doing what he does, not act merely to suit his author's convenience. In "Green Tea", Mr. Le Fanu wants Dr. Hesselius to be absent and unreachable, so that Mr. Jennings can cut his own throat with a razor; otherwise, there will have to be a terribly anti-climactic account of how Dr. Hesselius treated and cured him. As it is, Dr. Hesselius can merely say how, in general, he would have dealt with the case. He is confident that he would have succeeded in banishing the horrible monkey which haunts Mr. Jennings on and off; he has already succeeded in curing fifty-seven patients comparably afflicted.

Mr. Le Fanu succeeds in solving his own technical problem, but only by making Dr. Hesselius guilty of grave professional negligence. Dr. Hesselius goes off to an inn, two miles out of town, to think the case over thoroughly for some hours of the night and for so much of the next morning as it might require. He gives nobody his address. Yet he told Mr. Jennings to send for him at once should the monkey return, as it might at any moment. Moreover, he is perfectly aware that "poor Mr. Jennings" is a potential suicide. With fifty-seven other cases behind him, surely ten minutes at most would suffice for picking out the case most like the present one, and the treatment, therefore, most likely to succeed, or anyhow, the best one to try for a start.

If would not be hard, either, to make a neater ending. Dr. Hesselius might promise to start the treatment as soon as he gets back from the nearest apothecary's with the necessary drugs. On his return, just as the hackney cab is about to pull up, Mr. Jennings, in a blind panic, rushes out of the house and under the horse's hooves. He lives just long enough to say, "It came back". Anything rather than make an allegedly brilliant doctor behave like an absolute fool.

In *Madam Crowl's Ghost*, there is one disgusting story, disgusting to all who love cats: "The White Cat of Drumgunniol". This cat

made his first appearance eighty or ninety years before, at the wake of heartless old Connor Donovan, the narrator's great-uncle. So far, he sounds like "the redoubted adversary of the genus mus" whom Dr. James provides to haunt the guilty Archdeacon Haynes in "The Stalls of Barchester Cathedral". The white cat, however, is also the death warning of all the Donovans, none of whom are old Con's direct descendants; something like a banshee, but with a difference:—"The banshee seems to be animated with an affectionate sympathy with the bereaved family to whom it is hereditarily attached, whereas this thing has about it a suspicion of malice. It is the messenger simply of death. And its taking the shape of a cat—the coldest, and they say, the most vindictive of brutes—is indicative of the spirit of its visit."

That must have been painful reading for Dr. James, who was known to all his friends as a very great lover of cats, scarcely ever without at least one in his household.

Nevertheless, here was a great overall achievement; there are odd "weak places in his armour", but, in their specialised field, Mr. Le Fanu was for Dr. James the great master.

The two had, after all, a good deal in common. When Dr. James declares:—"He was a scholar and a gentleman, and, by all accounts, a most attractive personality", that certainly applies to himself also. Livermere Rectory was home for Dr. James from infancy through to middle age; the old Rector lived to be nearly eighty-seven; so surviving long enough to see his son as Provost of King's. It would be comparable with the Abington Rectory of Mr. Le Fanu's boyhood in the 1820s. There is, however, one great difference. Livermere is in Suffolk, Abington in County Limerick. Both authors at times drew on local material. In "The Ash Tree", Dr. James uses East Anglian traditions of seventeenth century witchcraft. He makes a good story of it, but he could never have done what Mr. Le Fanu was capable of doing, that is, written a quite serious story for adult readers of a little boy stolen by what are euphemistically termed 'the Good People': a story of contemporary life, not an old legend. "The Child that went with the Fairies" first appeared in *All the Year Round* in 1870. It was acceptable for an English periodical, but it is safe to say that no Englishman could have written it. Dr. James mentioned that Mr. Le Fanu was "an Irishman of Huguenot descent", and elsewhere spoke of the "blend of French and Irish", but did not point to anything specific that could be reckoned as a result. Now



that ability to speak of fairies in a plain matter of fact way, at that period of history, came from the Irish part of Mr. Le Fanu's inheritance, no doubt about it.

The careers of the two men have this in common, that neither had to struggle with way upwards. Mr. Le Fanu was Mr. Sheridan's great-nephew, and Dublin abounded in his Sheridan and other relations. It cannot have been hard for him to carve himself his comfortable niche in Ascendancy society. Dr. James is a striking example of a scholar who rose in the academic world without trying: without intriguing, without self-advertising conduct and, more remarkably, without making enemies. For all his appointments he was simply the obvious candidate.

As writers, I began by contrasting the two, but in one sense they are closely comparable. In the preface to the collected edition of his Stories, published in 1931, Dr. James said simply:—"I am told they have given pleasure of a certain sort to my readers; if so, my whole object in writing them has been obtained". Similarly:—"I would represent that Le Fanu is pretty obviously one who writes Stories for his own (and his readers') pleasure: he has no axe to grind, no cause to champion; no crusade to preach; in none of his books do I find any *tendency*—unless it be in the one in which he makes fun of spiritualism. His object is to tell a story, usually one that will mystify and alarm his reader."

What makes this remarkable is that, after all, Mr. Le Fanu was living and writing in Dublin during a period of Irish history that included the latter days of Mr. Daniel O'Connell, the Young Ireland and Fenian movements, and the Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland—not to mention the Famine. Mr. Le Fanu had, in fact, abjured public life from the start. He was called to the Irish Bar in 1839, apparently to pacify his family, but he never practised. The law offered the possibility of a brilliant career, with the remoter, but real, possibility of assassination, and the virtual certainty of controversy, and sundering quarrels with old friends. Mr. Le Fanu preferred a quieter life as a writer, and as editor and owner of various periodicals. In his later years, following his wife's early death in 1858, but surely not entirely on account of it, he lived more and more as a recluse in his house in Merriion Square. He died there on 7th February 1873.

Master James, then aged ten and a half, was already familiar with Mr. Le Fanu's work, having read, if nothing else, "The Haunted House in Westminster", alternatively known

as "Mr. Justice Harbottle", in *Belgravia*, the issue of January 1872.

One thing that it did not occur to Dr. James to say was that Mr. Le Fanu had, as he had himself, a sturdy sense of good and evil. It is precisely the absence of traditional moral values that makes the professedly modern person unable to write a proper ghost story, or to read one with understanding. As critic, the modern person produces something psycho-analytic and remarkably silly; as writer, something stupid and disgusting.

There has, however, been a certain revival of interest in Dr. James, following his fiftieth anniversary, in 1986. There have been several new collected or selected editions; there has also been at least one new selection of Mr. Le Fanu's Stories. It is to be hoped there are readers enough to encourage publishers in such well-doing.

#### Correspondence

### A Dark Confession

MADAM, I have a confession to make. It is a bit of a terrible one and I am not sure whether I should burden you with it, but I feel I should get it off my chest. You see, I er—I umm—

Oh bother. I watch television.

Actually, it is not quite as bad as it sounds. No, really it isn't. You see, we have a rather jolly little old black and white set and we never use it for watching "live" television. Only for watching video-films which have been recorded in advance. We only watch old films and some old cartoons (Betty Boop and Bugs Bunny, for example. Does there exist a Romantic who does not secretly or openly adore Betty Boop and Bugs Bunny?) and a few television things from the '50s such as *The Lone Ranger*.

Stories and news broadcasts about the future indicate that there will be television broadcasting for an hour or two a day in the new century, and we use our television in very much that spirit. Do any other readers do the same? Perhaps we could start a club for exchanging film-tapes. Perhaps Perfect could even publish a guide to films and programmes!

Especially for children and young people, I think films are terribly important for giving them examples of movement, diction, style and manner in a world which has otherwise lost the art of such things. Any one who saw the television version of *Brideshead Revisited* (I am sorry, I did, and it was a lesson to me. I don't do that sort of thing any more) will realise that even the best-made reconstructions of the past are terribly overlaid by modern

mannerisms and the spirit of *groosh*. How else but by watching films can the young ever learn how real human beings move and walk and talk; hold a wine-glass, get into a motor-car, smile, express anger or endearment? Books can only tell so much. Films are needed, and so is imperial, new-century television, made possible by the miracle of modern science.

I say, have I gone too far? I assure you that I still remain, as I always will,  
YR. OBT. SERV'T., MR. S. T. FENWICK.

#### Record Reviews

### The Latest Music

by Pippit

WHATTIE-whattie-whattie, ho-ho-ho as the Bard so eloquently put it. Well, he did say "what ho", anyway, and quite often, and one must expect later generations to elaborate on it. That is Progress, don't you know. Evolution, I shouldn't wonder. But enough of this gay banter and down to the earnest business of life.

Once again, Tin Pan Alley has been churning it out and the record companies have been making collections on tapes and bendies; and once again, here is little Pippit to tell you all about it. Numbers refer to cassette versions, so you can order them for your Home Service wireless. For the bendy version just strike off the initial 'M', or in the first case, the final 'C'.

First on the list is *Tony Martin, Something in the Air* (Movie Stars, CMSC 004). Who, you are probably asking, is Tony Martin. Well, he is a movie star, or rather a—well, whatever is the boy-version of Starlet. This record series is based on a rather ripping idea. We all know the chaps who do the big songs and star in the films—Bing Crosby, Fred Astaire, Dick Powell and all that illustrious company; but there are lots of other chaps who make the films delightful and whose names we shall probably never know. *Tony Martin* is one of them—so now you do know his name. He started his Hollywood career a year or so ago in that topping *Ginger Rogers* and *Fred Astaire* film, *Follow the Fleet*. Of course you saw it. Well, good old Tony Martin was one of the sailors. He was seen briefly on a number of occasions and even spoke a line or two. His first singing appearance was in the charming Shirley Temple film *Poor Little Rich Girl* (don't pretend you didn't see that one), where he was a singer on the wireless and sang a few lines of "When I'm With You". Since then, he has

been singing whole songs and generally adding to the merriment in all sorts of films. He has even starred in one film, *Sing and Be Happy* in 1937, though it was not exactly a box-office smash, and he is married to the vivacious Miss Alice Faye. Whether Mr. Martin will "make it big", as they say over there, this year or next, or whether he will always be one of the supporting cast, lending glamour and melody to the confections of Hollywood, he is making a lot of very charming records, and it is delightful to have this collection. I must say that I did not know any of the songs on this record, but it is a splendid collection of the latest Hollywood and dance-band music sung by a very able young singer, accompanied in one case by his more famous wife.

Now every one, I suppose, has heard of the Quintet of the Hot Club of France. Here is a programme of the music of its two leading players, Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli, entitled *Swing from Paris* (Happy Days, MCHD 165). Mostly they are playing with the Quintet, occasionally alone (I mean, alone together). There are some splendid standards here—"Miss Annabelle Lee", "After You've Gone", "Avalon" and others, as well as some less well-known material. These two musicians are among the most accomplished in the field of popular instrumentalism, and Mr. Grappelli's hot violin has to be heard to be believed. Like much French music, it can on occasion seem just a shade too smooth. I have never noticed it hearing the odd Hot Club number among other things, but with a whole programme together, one can get the rather soft-edged feeling that one gets from the swing music of the '50s. Unfair, no doubt, because this is in quite a different class and all recorded much more recently (between 1938 and '35), but I thought I should mention it.

Now for the gem: *Hutch, Singing for You... Every One* (Happy Days, MCHD 155). If you don't know Hutch (or Leslie Hutchinson if you want to be formal), then you jolly well should, and this volume is a pipping way to go about it. The stylish piano playing and velvety chocolate-brown voice with its splendid diction give a wonderful style to the latest songs. "The Girl in the Alice Blue Gown", "These Foolish Things", "September in the Rain" and more than a dozen others are rendered by the impeccable Hutch. The record sleeve contains the standard wowse about the '30s and the contrast between hardship and luxury. Bothered if I know what it has to do with Hutch, but the lower strata of the petty-intelligentsia seem to have an inexhaustible capacity for trundling

out the same half-truth in the same words on every possible occasion. As if the æsthetic impoverishment of the 1990s (where the sleeve-writer appears to live) were not utterly hideous and did not condemn every one, rich or poor, to live in a State of abject mental squalor. In the 1930s, at least every one has Hutch.

I suppose almost every one who has any sort of a record collection (I mean real records now, not bendies) must have several of those Decca Charlie Kunz piano medleys (the name is apparently pronounced "coons" by the bye). I do not know how many of them he made, but it must have been hundreds. Three picked from my collection at random are entitled "Charlie Kunz Piano Medley No. 113", "Charlie Kunz Piano Medley No. R. 9" and "Charlie Kunz Piano Medley No. D. 110". Mr. Kunz plays in a curiously accented style, and must at some time have played just about every popular tune there is. His medleys are splendid for games of guess-the-tune. *Charlie Kunz, The Music Goes Round* (Happy Days MCHD 162) is a collection of these medleys, and, as Mr. Kunz gets three tunes onto each side of his records, it is not surprising that this collection contains no less than 50 songs played in the inimitable Kunz manner, ranging from "Auld Lang Syne" through "The Merry Widow Waltz" to "Dinah" and "I Can't Give You Anything but Love, Baby". What a wonderful guess-the-tune sesh. you can have with this!

Sir Harry Lauder, *'Roamin' in the Gloamin'* (Happy Days, MCHD 164) is a splendid collection of songs from the great Scottish Music-Hall artist. I have heard of him often of course, but had not previously heard him sing. He has a truly remarkable personality and one can well understand his enormous popularity. I was interested to note that, apart from two traditional airs "The Road to the Isles" and "Loch Lomond", everything here was written wholly or partly by Sir Harry himself, including "Roamin' in the Gloamin'", "I Love A Lassie" and "Keep Right On to the End of the Road".

We end, as we began, with a name you may not have heard, although the sleeve note assures us that he is the best of all American tenors. *Richard Crooks, All of My Heart* (Happy Days, MCHD 167) presents this delightful tenor in a range of operatic arias and Victorian drawing-room ballads. Splendid, versatile singing with some beautiful accompaniments, this is an Arcadian entertainment to give you a well-earned rest from all the Pipsie nonsense.

FOR ALL THE FUN ON THE AIR  
INSIST ON IMPERIAL

### Etiquette

## Romantic Courtship

### Part II

#### Who Pays?

A QUESTION much simpler than those considered in our previous chapter is that of who pays when the couple go out together. The answer is: always and invariably the man (well, almost invariably—there may be the occasional extreme-Bohemian exception, but this will be for the most extreme-Bohemian reasons, never as a matter of mere dullness or equality). A Romantic girl does not feel the need to "pay her way", which both she and her escort consider vulgar; the most regal of princesses has no yearnings to demonstrate "economic equality". Whether the man's control of the financial side is seen as a symbol of his control over things in general, or as a humble service to his lady, or as a subtle mixture of the two things, that control is, and should be, his.

In these difficult times, of course, there may be practical problems. The girl may, in fact, be much better off than the man, or they may both be fairly poor, so that a pooling of resources is desirable in order for them to eat out decently. There are no absolute rules as to how such problems should be overcome; and it is a problem which the girl has to play the greater part in solving. The two guiding rules are: 1) it should be done tactfully and 2) the man should end up doing the physical act of paying. For example, the girl may buy tickets for a concert and may tell her escort that she "has tickets" and would like to go. He will, of course, pay any fares, for drinks etc. We have heard of a girl who would slip money into her escort's glove and would never acknowledge the action, and of those who are on terms sufficiently informal to discuss the matter, often in most fantastical and theatricalised ways.

We should stress, though, that whatever convenient arrangements may be made, it is the man's natural place to pay and such arrangements should not be expected or taken for granted nor (usually) initiated at a very early stage in the friendship. It should also be remembered that the old argument that a girl spends more of her money on clothes than a man does, while it may be outdated among jeans-wearing modern types, is still very true for Romantics. The Romantic man's evening

clothes may be dear, but he wears them for most of his life, while the Romantic girl of slender means finds clothes an important item in her budget.

It should be borne in mind as a point of etiquette that it is the man's prerogative to pay. If he insists upon doing so, there should be no argument about it.

#### Chaperonage

We have read in a book written earlier in this century that the good sense and innate decency of British young people made it unnecessary for us to have the strict system of chaperonage in force in European countries. Such a passage promotes sad reflections upon how far and how rapidly our countrymen and women have fallen. Chaperonage is often not practicable among Romantics and it is generally considered that the qualities spoken of above have not, among our people, disintegrated. If you should find yourself in a *milieu* where chaperonage is practised, you will, of course, comply with all that is expected.

A word on "good sense" which I hope is unnecessary. Remember that Romantic girls do not use such drugs and devices as would protect them from the results of an indiscretion; remember that good name and reputation, once lost, can never be recovered; and remember that if a girl have friends worthy of the name, the best course for the man responsible for such loss is to quit the country nor ever hope to return.

#### Engagement

Engagements tend to be long among Romantics. Or rather, the whole process of courtship tends to be long. How much of this is formal engagement varies, but the engagement should not be a very short one.

There are two reasons for this. First, courtship and engagement are a charming period which can only be lived once; and secondly, one can only be married once, so one must make sure that it is charming. Addison wrote: "Those marriages generally abound most with love and constancy that are preceded by a long courtship. The passion should strike root and gather strength before marriage be grafted on it. A long course of hopes and expectations fixes the idea in our minds and habituates us to a fondness of the person beloved."

Marriage is for life, whatever may be the practice among the more degraded of the natives, and it is decidedly unwise to rush into it in the first flush of infatuation.

The proposal is, of course, made by the man

(the status of the leap-year rule is uncertain, but we believe it has been used) and he presents the girl with an engagement ring. The custom of having a ring ready in a velvet box for the moment when the question is asked is a charming one, but has the disadvantage of not allowing the girl any choice. A suitor, however, will know his beloved's tastes and Romantics often look for something antique, hereditary or otherwise unique rather than a new shop-ring, which makes the "choice of styles" element less important. It is a good idea to discuss tastes in jewellery and rings well in advance, so that the man has a good idea of what appeals to the romantic soul of his adored one.

#### Breaking an Engagement

Of course, one should not break an engagement lightly, but should you decide that yours must be broken, then you must break it. A dinner engagement should only be broken for the most pressing of reasons. A marriage engagement can and should be broken upon no better excuse than "I am sorry, I just do not feel like it." However many preparations have been made and however late it may be (even to replying "No" in the Service itself), you must have the courage to end the connexion if you feel it necessary.

The reasons for this are obvious. Once the step has been taken it is irrevocable. Then all doubts will be too late. Part of the reason for the engagement is to give a period in which those doubts can be examined in one's own heart. Of course, broken engagements are the exception rather than the rule; and of course they are an embarrassment to all concerned and a cause of distress to the betrothed; but it is better to face the ordeal than to risk making both of you unhappy.

#### Marriage

Finally a word which takes us beyond the strict definition of this essay. Courtship is, of course, the preamble to marriage. Among the natives, it is now-a-days possible to slip into this latter state almost insensibly, having already pre-empted its privileges and prerogatives in the flabby, meaningless self-indulgence of modern immorality; the transition from the "single" to the "married" (I use inverted commas advisedly) may be effected by a secular ceremony which is devoid of ritual efficacy and which confers no sacramental union; the contract, having been made, is easily broken and not truly binding: the state of those thus "united", in short, may be in all respects

virtually identical to their former State.

Under such circumstances it is hard for modern people to understand that there may be blisses and ecstasies beyond their primitive biological understanding of the matter; that marriage involves love and courage and honour (the first has been debased beyond recognition and the other two have vanished); that it is a union of the profoundest significance; a sacred compact against the profane world and one of the greatest adventures—probably the greatest adventure of one's life.

To the young man or woman setting out on life's course, we would say this. You have the chance of that adventure, that ecstasy, that sacred quest. It may not be easy to find—sacred adventures rarely are. But keep yourself pure and prepare yourself; you—because you know what only the very few now know—have the opportunity to find what in the modern world has been all but obliterated. We bless you on your great adventure, and God be with you, always.

#### Helpful Hints

### Taming the Dragon

SINCE it is not possible to say words like *mètre* and *litre* in decent company, and since various of the native tradesmen have been browbeaten and bamboozled into using the things, it becomes desirable, when one has occasion to converse about the mundane matters of life, to have rough and ready translations into respectable English easily to hand. Here, for our readers' convenience and disembarassment, *The English Magazine* is happy to present a few such approximations:

A *mètre* is approximately a yard. It may be referred to as a yard under almost all circumstances. Where, for some reason, it is absolutely necessary to make it clear that you are not referring to an exact yard it may be called a *long* or a *French* yard.

A *litre* is approximately a quart. Actually, it is rather pleasant to return to dealing in old-fashioned quarts rather than pimminy pints. Again, where it is quite unavoidable, one may call it a *short* or a *French* quart.

A *kilogram* is a little over 2lb. One refers, therefore, to "a 2lb bag of sugar" etc.

It is perhaps a little disconcerting to apply such approximations to our august and ancient Imperial measures, although obviously it is better than using the ghastly foreignisms which seek to displace them. For those who find it distressing, we would offer the follow-

ing solace: measures such as the pound (*librum*) are traditional to Western humanity not only in this country but, before the French Revolution, throughout Europe. They are based upon natural and human proportions rather than rationalistic concoction. They are still used in daily life by many European peasants after nearly two centuries of official 'metrification'. But their *standardisation* is a much more recent thing. In this country the exact length of a yard used to vary from district to district. The expression "a country mile" (as opposed to the standardised city mile) is a memory of this. It is not unlikely that in some districts of England the local yard was a similar length to the modern French yard. It is, therefore, not without precedent that one might have to deal with more than one type of yard, quart or gallon (a French gallon is four French quarts).

We, of course, will continue to use proper Imperial measures. However, while it may be galling (we intend no pun) that their exact proportions have been dictated by the crankish notions of foreign regicides, it is, from our point of view, not entirely without consolation that the old unstandardised vagaries should have returned.

We have heard it objected that a French quart is too much less than a quart to be so called. Nothing can be more easily disproved. The American quart is considerably less than the French quart. In fact the French quart stands about mid-way between the Imperial and American quarts: yet who has difficulty in accepting American pints, quarts and gallons when in America?

Every European nation used the foot before the introduction of regicide measurement, and my 1749 dictionary gives the different values for the foot for Amsterdam, Antwerp, Paris, Bremen, Rome, Copenhagen, Frankfurt and Cologne, Venice and Danzig, ranging from nearly 14 English inches at Venice to eleven and two-fifths at Frankfurt and Cologne.

We reiterate: this is in no sense an apology for regicide measures. We must continue to use true Imperial measures in all things; but where foreign variants are forced on our notice, quick methods of rough translation must be at hand that they shall fail in their intent of compelling us to the use of their alien and philosophically malevolent terms and concepts. Thus we protect our own lives from the poison without and draw the dragon's teeth.

DON'T GIVE AN INCH  
INSIST ON IMPERIAL